

INTERIM JOINT COMMITTEE ON TOURISM, SMALL BUSINESS, AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Minutes of the 4th Meeting of the 2024 Interim

September 26, 2024

Call to Order and Roll Call

The fourth meeting of the Interim Joint Committee on Tourism, Small Business, and Information Technology was held on September 26, 2024, at 1:00 PM in Room 149 of the Capitol Annex. Representative Kim King, Chair, called the meeting to order, and the secretary called the roll.

Present were:

Members: Representative Kim King Co-Chair; Senator Max Wise Co-Chair; Representative Phillip Pratt Co-Chair; Senators Shelley Funke Frommeyer, Denise Harper Angel, Jason Howell, Reginald Thomas, Phillip Wheeler, and Mike Wilson; Representatives Chad Aull, Shane Baker, Ryan Dotson, Daniel Fister, Deanna Frazier Gordon, Chris Freeland, Richard Heath, Nima Kulkarni, Savannah Maddox, Candy Massaroni, Shawn McPherson, Michael Sarge Pollock, Rachel Roberts, Sarah Stalker, Bill Wesley, and Richard White.

Guests: Russ Meyer, Commissioner, Department of Parks, Kentucky Tourism, Arts, and Heritage Cabinet; Representative Steve Riley, House District 23; and Jamie Byrd, Barren County Judge/Executive.

LRC Staff: Janine Coy, Christian Deeter, Austin Johnson, Matissa Robinson, and Sasche Allen.

Approval of Minutes

A motion to approve the minutes of the August 29, 2024, meeting was made by Representative Massaroni, seconded by Representative McPherson, and approved by voice vote.

Barren River Lake State Resort Park Update

Representative Steve Riley and Jamie Byrd, Barren County Judge Executive, provided an update on the conditions of Barren River Lake State Resort Park. Ms. Byrd explained that a lack of routine maintenance and repairs has caused portions of the park to deteriorate despite being an economic asset to the area. Issues discussed included needed repairs to the park's pool, an improperly installed roof, and staffing shortages.

Representative McPherson discussed decreasing occupancy rates due to the pool closure at the park, needed structural and systems repairs, and mold issues due to an improperly installed roof.

Answering questions from Senator Wheeler, Representative Riley discussed utilizing local contractors for needed repairs or maintenance as opposed to contractors that do not reside in the area. Ms. Byrd stated the Barren County Contractors Association would be equipped to offer licensed and insured contractors.

In response to remarks made by Senator Wilson, Ms. Byrd expressed a declining trust in the park after years of deterioration.

Representative Roberts made comments about the overall tourism and economic benefits of state parks and proposed legislation to address deferred maintenance issues that was not passed by the General Assembly.

Addressing a question from Chairwoman King, Representative Riley and Ms. Byrd clarified they did not have any further details about the improperly installed roof.

Replying to Senator Funke Frommeyer, Ms. Byrd spoke about considering the return on investment in her position as judge executive.

Kentucky State Parks Update

Russ Meyer, Commissioner, Department of Parks, Kentucky Tourism, Arts, and Heritage Cabinet, reported on the progress of state park improvement projects. In 2022, the General Assembly appropriated \$150 million to the Tourism, Arts, and Heritage Cabinet to update and improve state parks across the Commonwealth. The first allotment of \$79 million was released in 2023, and the second allotment of \$71 million was released in 2024. In 2024, the legislature increased the Department of Parks' Construction Branch project threshold from \$250,000 to \$500,000. For the first allotment, the Department of Parks approved \$40 million for campground upgrades, \$20 million for utility improvements, \$6 million for broadband upgrades, \$7.5 million for Lake Barkley State Resort Park structural repairs, and \$5.5 million for Jenny Wiley State Resort Park structural repairs. For the second allotment, the department approved \$27 million for building systems improvements, \$22 million for accommodation and hospitality upgrades, and \$22 million for recreational amenity upgrades. Most projects require submission of design plans, followed by the issuance of requests for proposals (RFPs) for construction, contractor selections, and contract awards. Thus far, bath house renovations at Barren River Lake State Resort Park and Nolin Lake State Park; broadband upgrades at Dale Hollow Lake and Carter Caves State Resort Parks; phase one of Lake Barkley State Resort Park's structural repairs; a portion of phase one structural repairs at Jenny Wiley State Resort Park; one building system improvement

project at General Butler State Resort Park; and recreational amenity upgrade projects at Carter Caves, E.P. Tom Sawyer, Jefferson Davis, and Kentucky Dam Village State Resort Parks, have been completed.

Answering a question from Chairwoman King regarding the improperly installed roof mentioned by the previous speakers, Commissioner Meyer stated he would follow up with additional details.

In response to questions from Representative McPherson, Commissioner Meyer explained that a large percentage of the first allotment of funding was designated for campground upgrades and utility improvements. Most related projects are in the beginning phases of completion, and the department has applied for an additional federal grant for utility improvements. There are no current applications for federal broadband grant funding. He clarified that the \$79 million was released in 2023, but the additional \$71 million was not released until 2024. Answering additional questions, Commissioner Meyer spoke about the department's skillful staff and being authorized to increase wages. He said he would follow up about occupancy rates.

Addressing a question from Representative Massaroni, Commissioner Meyer said plans for upgrades to the My Old Kentucky Home State Park's golf course are in progress, including improvements to the irrigation system.

Replying to Representative Kulkarni, Commissioner Meyer discussed plans for ADA mobility improvements and a pedestrian bridge project at Dale Hollow Lake State Resort Park. Addressing a follow up question, he said the department receives state funding and revenue generated from fees. The state contributes between 45 and 50 percent of the department's total funding.

Answering a question from Representative Dotson regarding repairs to the pool at Fort Boonesborough State Park, Commissioner Meyer said a pool consultant was acquired and planning is in progress with no expected date of completion.

Responding to Representative Freeland, Commissioner Meyer discussed utility and broadband improvement progress, a high priority for Kentucky. Answering a follow up question, he said the department works closely with local communities to improve public relations.

Addressing Senator Wheeler, Commissioner Meyer discussed holding contractors accountable for substandard work and gave assurance that current problems will not be future issues.

Replying to Representative Aull, Commissioner Meyer discussed the procurement process which includes acquiring consultants, preparing designs, obtaining RFPs, and working with contractors. In response to a follow up, he spoke to appropriations received before he served as commissioner. The department presently has over 300 projects in progress, excluding planned projects.

Adjournment

There being no further business before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 2:18 PM.